

TOPIC 16: DENTAL CARE

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

People with diabetes are at risk for damage to nerves and tissues that may affect your gums and teeth. People with diabetes are generally more susceptible to bacterial infection and may have less ability to fight bacteria once infection occurs. Not everyone will have dental problems, but the best defense is to control blood sugars, practice healthy personal habits, and learn to recognize symptoms of problems. In addition, it is important to get regular dental cleanings and check-ups.

KEY MESSAGES

1. The most common oral health problem for people with diabetes is gum disease.
2. Gum disease is a progressive disease, ranging from gingivitis to periodontitis, the most severe form..
3. Other oral health problems include an increased risk of infection, poor healing, and dry mouth.
4. Good blood sugar control is the number way to prevent and limit oral health problems.
5. Taking good care of teeth and gums plus regular checkups with your dentist will help prevent or limit oral health problems.

BACKGROUND

When blood sugar is high, gum and mouth infections are common because sugar allows bacteria to grow. The mouth is also a nice warm and moist environment that many bacteria like to grow in. Even with good control of your blood sugar, you may have more dental problems than other people. The first stage of gum disease is called gingivitis. Gingivitis begins with plaque. Plaque is a sticky film of germs, saliva, and food. This film settles at the gums and can cause them to be red, very tender, and may even cause bleeding. The most serious form of gum disease is called periodontitis. At this stage, the gums begin to pull back from your teeth and pockets are formed that fill with germs, pus, and become deeper. This infection, if left untreated, can cause bone damage and tooth loss. The best defense against gingivitis and periodontitis is good blood glucose control along with daily brushing and flossing to clean the plaque away. Getting teeth cleaned twice a year by a dental hygienist and regular checkups with a dentist will help prevent problems before they begin.

SIGNS OF GUM DISEASE

Because gum disease does not hurt until serious damage has been done, it is important to know the warning signs:

- Bleeding gums when you brush or floss
- Swollen, red, or sore gums
- Bad breath
- Gums that are pulled away from the teeth
- Moving or loose teeth

- If you wear full or partial dentures or have a bridge, watch for changes in the way they fit when you chew and bite.

TIPS ON HOW TO KEEP TEETH HEALTHY:

- Brush teeth for two minutes twice a day.
- Look for bleeding gums or sores in mouth.
- Floss between your teeth after meals and before you brush.
- Do not smoke.
- Visit your dentist twice a year if possible and find a dentist who understands your diabetes care.
- Learn how to properly brush and floss your teeth by using the reference handouts.

BRUSHING YOUR TEETH:

- Use a soft bristle toothbrush; firmer toothbrushes may damage gums
- Brush both the teeth and the gums.
- Place the brush at an angle and use a rolling, back and forth motion
- Brush the biting surface of the teeth using a gentle, back and forth scrubbing motion
- Brush your tongue from back to front to remove odor-causing bacteria

FLOSSING YOUR TEETH:

- Flossing removes plaque between teeth and at the gumline
- Use about 18 inches of floss
- Guide floss gently between teeth using a zigzag motion. Wrap floss around each tooth and slide up and down against the tooth and under the gumline
- Be sure to use a clean section of floss for each tooth
- If you have trouble flossing, ask your dentist or dental hygienist to demonstrate the best way to floss.

IF YOU HAVE DENTURES:

- Full or partial dentures should be brushed daily with a soft toothbrush and denture cleaning paste, baking soda, or even hand soap. Never use toxic or abrasive cleaners on your dentures.
- Brush dentures on all sides and rinse with clean water
- Brush your gums with a soft toothbrush and toothpaste.
- Brush your tongue to remove bacteria.
- When you are not using your dentures, soak them in a denture soaking solution or clean water to prevent them from drying out

PATIENT OUTCOMES/GOALS

By the end of the educational session, the client with diabetes will be able to:

- Explain why dental care is important for people living with diabetes

- Recognize early signs and symptoms of infection and when there may be a problem with their teeth or gums
- Discuss why regular dental care is important for people with diabetes
- Demonstrate daily practices to prevent dental problems

CHW ACTIONS	PARTICIPANT ACTIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review why dental care is an important part of diabetes health • Discuss signs and symptoms of gum disease • Recommend daily dental care practices • Provide resources for client to obtain dental care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problem-solve any barriers to obtaining dental care. • Demonstrate correct brushing and flossing techniques • Make appointment with dentist if needed

TOOLS/TEACHING AIDES

- None

HANDOUTS

1. **Module 16 Coversheet**English | Spanish
2. **Diabetes Dental Tips**[English](#) | [Spanish](#)
Source: [National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research](#)
3. **How to floss your teeth**.....[English](#) | [Spanish](#)
Source: [American Dental Association](#), 2005
4. **How to brush your teeth**[English](#) | [Spanish](#)
Source: [American Dental Association](#), 2005
5. **Take Good care of Your Teeth and Mouth**.....[English](#) | [Spanish](#)
Source: [Public Health – Seattle & King County](#)
6. **Action Plan**.....[English](#) | [Spanish](#)
Source: [Public Health – Seattle & King County](#)

REFERENCES

Expanding our Reach Diabetes Curriculum and Training Manual

National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research, <http://www.nidcr.nih.gov/>

Version	Date	Description	Staff	Final
V.1.	12/23/2011	Original	KA/ JK	Yes
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